

State Responsibilities



Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Planning Course

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Note: States are required to furnish references and pre-course reading materials not included in the course notebooks.

Key elements to help ensure the success of the course as it is taught in the state

- Selection of instructors, group leaders, and coaches.
- Selection of farms / ranches for the field exercise for Modules 6, 7, 8.
- Tailor the course to meet the needs of the state and the particular audience.
- Thorough preparation by the instructors and group leaders prior to the course.
- Arrangements and preparation with the farm / ranch clients prior to the course.
- Development of materials for the field exercise.
- Audience participation and sharing of experiences throughout the course.
- Enthusiasm of the instructors, group leaders, and coaches.
- Formation of participant planning groups for Modules 6, 7, 8.
- Follow through by the participants, coaches, and supervisors with the assignment in Module 9.

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Additional information on each of these items is included below.

Selection of Course Instructors

Instructors—Individuals who provide classroom or field instruction for the course. The instructors for the field exercise also serve as the substitute clients, where indicated in the modules, to answer questions and provide information to the groups as they proceed through the planning process. Instructors have a proficiency level of 5 for conservation planning.

- Individuals with excellent communication skills.
- Experts in conservation planning - proficiency level 5. Can perform independently. Can train others to do the task.
- Recognized as skilled in current conservation planning methods and have a proven track record in developing complete, comprehensive conservation plans.
- Recognized as a subject expert for that portion of the course they are teaching or have expert support available.
- Have a strong desire to teach the course.
- Have the time to thoroughly prepare for the course and present the materials.
- Have the supervisor's support and commitment for this assignment.
- Include a cross section of disciplines and a cross section of field, area, and state office personnel.

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Selection of the Group Leaders for Modules 6, 7, 8

Group Leaders—Individuals who help guide their assigned group through the planning process and help facilitate the teaching and learning experience. Group leaders have a proficiency level of 4 or 5 for conservation planning.

- Individuals who are at a proficiency level of 4 - 5 for conservation planning.
- Possess excellent communication skills.
- Able to work with groups of people.
- Have the time to thoroughly prepare for the field exercise.
- Willing to attend the course as a participant as well as a group leader.

Selection and Duties of Participant Coaches for Module 9

Selection of the Coaches:

- Individuals who are at a proficiency level of 4 - 5 for conservation planning.
- Know how to work with people.
- Will dedicate the time needed to provide coaching to the course participant assigned.
- May or may not be the course participant's supervisor.
- Willing to attend the course as a participant as well as a coach.
- Could be a volunteer - retired NRCS, etc.

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- Could also be an instructor in the course.
- Have their supervisor's support and commitment for this assignment.
- Will work with the course participant in a coaching mode to complete Module 9.
- Will work with the course participant's supervisor to certify quality completion of the conservation plan, conservation plan evaluation, and conservation plan revision called for in Module 9. The target timeline for completion of Module 9 is within four months.

Duties of the Coaches:

1. During Part 2, Modules 6 - 8 (Part 1 also if presented in the classroom):
 - Share their planning experiences and knowledge.
 - Network with the class members.
2. During Part 3, Module 9 (On-the-job assignment):
 - Provide coaching assistance as the participant completes the assignment...ask questions, answer questions, provide encouragement, challenge the participant, monitor progress, make suggestions, provide explanations, provide additional training, etc.
 - Evaluate the quality of the products produced.
 - Ensure that the products meet NRCS planning standards before they are passed on to the participant's supervisor and the client.

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- Consult with the clients on the quality of the service provided by the participant and provide appropriate feedback to the participant.
- Work with the participant's supervisor to certify that the assignment was completed in a quality and timely manner and that the participant has reached a proficiency level of 4, apply independently, in conservation planning.

Selection of a Farm or Ranch for the Field Exercise (Modules 6 and 7)—items to consider

- A diversified unit
- A balance of land uses
- A challenging unit with existing problems to identify
- Potential opportunities to explore
- A unit where the client has multiple objectives
- A good illustration for resource inventory purposes
- A typical farm or ranch for the area
- Logistics - easily accessible from the training site, etc.
- Safety, relative to on-site planning activities
- Materials in FOTG up-to-date for selected Farm/Ranch
- A unit located in an area with an Areawide Conservation Plan if one exists and it makes sense to select a unit within that area.

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Selection of a Farm or Ranch for the Field Exercise (Module 8)—items to consider

- A unit well into the implementation phase of the planning process
- A diversified unit
- A balance of land uses
- Possibly a unit with a conservation contract

Tailor the course to meet the needs of the state and audience—consider

- State and local laws, rules, and regulations
- Specific areas in the course that need more emphasis or less emphasis
- Unique state forms, worksheets, job sheets, etc.
- State supplements to policies, procedures, handbooks, manuals, etc.
- Partnership involvement in teaching or participating in the course
- Optional or additional exercises for the course

Preparation by the instructors and group leaders prior to the course

- Assignments, arrangements, coordination, and preparation needs to be completed well ahead of the start of the course.
- Complete logistics including meeting facilities, transportation, audiovisual equipment, computers, participant notebooks, etc.
- Additional responsibilities are listed below, module by module.

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Development of materials for the field exercise

- Field exercise notebook materials for Modules 6 and 7.
- Field exercise notebook materials for Module 8.

Audience participation and sharing of experiences throughout the course

- Each person involved in the course - participants, instructors, group leaders, and coaches - brings a wealth of experience that they can share during the course. The instructors should share their experiences and encourage others to do the same.
- Keep the audience involved and participating throughout all aspects of the course.

Enthusiasm of the instructors, group leaders, and coaches

- The instructors, group leaders, and coaches set the tone for the course.

Formation of participant planning groups for Modules 6, 7, 8

- Keep the groups small - 5 to 6 individuals.
- Include a mixture of more experienced and less experienced members in each group.
- Include a diversity of disciplines in each group.

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Follow through on the assignment for Module 9

- Ensure that this is a true teaching and learning experience on the part of the participant, coach, and supervisor.

Responsibilities Module by Module

Module 1—How NRCS Will Do Business

- I. Set up a coaching structure prior to the course.
 - A. Select the coaches.
 - B. Let the coaches and course participants know, prior to the course, who they will be working with, as a coach or participant, and the time commitments.
- II. Hold a question and answer session with the state conservationist and the course participants at the conclusion of the state conservationist's comments. The question and answer session would include the topics covered by the state conservationist and the pre-course reading materials.

Module 2—Planning Policy and Guidance

- I. Supplement pre-course reading with state materials as needed, e.g., policy and NPPH supplements, program direction, etc.
- II. Cover state and local requirements as a part of this module.
 - A. NRCS State Supplements to Conservation Planning Policy and the NPPH

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- B. State Supplements to other policies, i.e., FOTG, etc.
- C. Laws, other mandates and requirements
 - 1. State and Local, Tribal, Special District, etc.
- D. Programs
- III. Develop a handout listing the various policies covered in this module and the technical expert / contact person in the state that is responsible for each of them.

Module 3—Key Elements of Conservation Planning

- I. Identify any unique ecological, economic, or social concerns in the state.
- II. Identify any additional training or sources of information that may be available to the participants in the ecological, economic, and social arenas.

Module 4—Conservation Planning Environment Components and Interrelationships

- I. Thorough preparation by the instructors in order to effectively lead the participants through a discussion of the components and interrelationships of the conservation planning environment.

Module 5—Resource Management Systems

- I. Have the instructors fully prepared to cover the RMS process and use of the RMS tools.

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- II. Have sufficient instructors available to assist the teams with the optional exercise, as needed.
- III. Have 5 sets of the national CPPE matrices available for classroom use.

Module 6—Phase I of the Planning Process

- I. Preparation for planning on the farm or ranch for Modules 6 and 7.
 - A. Materials to assemble
 - 1. Maps, soils and soil interpretations, FOTG materials, climatic information for wind and water erosion estimates, soils information, guidance documents, cost share list, appropriate handbooks and manuals, FSA determinations, areawide conservation plan or assessment, and other planning information such as a river basin study, flood plain management study, RC&D plans, etc.
 - 2. Other information relative to the farm or ranch and planning effort such as economic and social considerations, partnership opportunities, potential outside resources, permit information, state and local laws or ordinances, etc.
- II. Set the stage with the farmer or rancher for the field exercise.
- III. Handle arrangements and preparation for the field trip.

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Module 7—Phase II of the Planning Process

- I. Identify potential sources of state or local funding for implementation.
- II. Cover items that the state wants for consistency in conservation plans.
 - A. Maps, worksheets, job sheets, reports, legends, map symbols
 1. Show examples

Module 8—Phase III of the Planning Process

- I. Preparation for evaluation on the farm or ranch for Module 8.
 - A. Utilize the farm or ranch, or portion thereof, where implementation of a conservation plan is well underway.
 - B. Materials to assemble
 1. Existing conservation plan, conservation contract, maps, supporting plan and implementation materials, worksheets, appropriate handbooks and manuals, areawide conservation plan or assessment, other planning information.
- II. Set the stage with the farmer or rancher for the field exercise.
- III. Handle arrangements and preparation for the field trip.

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Module 9—Course Wrap-up and Assignment

- I. Provide certificates and a group picture to the participants signifying completion of the formal portion of the course.
- II. Provide recognition for the farmers or ranchers who hosted the course.
- III. Provide an additional certificate to the participants, signifying overall completion of the course, when the assignments in module 9 have been successfully completed.
- IV. Provide the opportunities for the course participants, coaches, and supervisors to work together to successfully complete Module 9.